



NICETIES OF AACHAMANA VIDHI

(Concept-Significance-Technicalities-Merits-Do's & Don'ts)



In Hindu sampradaya any Nithya or Nymittika Karma begins always with a ritual called Aachamanam followed by Sankalpa which has religious and spiritual significance.

Aachamanam is the simplest of Vaidika karmas yet none the less in importance than an Aswamedha Yaaga. Its importance can be well realized when we note that it forms the prelude to all the rituals. No Vedic karma begins without Aachamanam.

➤ What is Aachamanam?

In simple terms the process of reciting the names of the Supreme God (Vishnu) while performing Jalapanam (sipping

drops of water) as per Vedic scripts is called Aachamanam (Aachamana).

It is a purification ritual wherein one sips water three times from Brahma Theertha (base of the right thumb) while reciting the divine names of Lord Vishnu.

It is done three times to make ourselves free from three shortcomings viz.

- > Kaayik (physical/bodily);
- > Vaachik (verbal) and
- > Maanasik (mental);

Aachamanam is an act of purifying the inner body (soul) by sipping water while praying the supreme God, the Primordial Person Lord Vishnu the Kaaraka for our existence.

Aachamana literally means to sip. But as a ritual of purification, it means to sip water three times from the right hand and then to touch (sparsha) the various sense organs and parts of the body while calling out the divine names.

This form of purification is in vogue since time immemorial. The physical benefit of this exercise is that, by sipping water thrice the throat is cleared from Vata, Pitta and Kapha doshas and one is then able to chant the manthra or recite the divine names clearly.

➤ **Types of Aachamanam...**

Aachamanam could be of different types arising from different scriptures based on the ceremony/ritual that is performed and on the lines of learning that is followed. There can also be difference in rules followed and the difference lies mainly in the mantras recited.

Reciting of manthras during Achamana differs from place to place, region to region based on sampradaya.

In some places we find people recite Achyutaya Namaha, Ananthaya Namaha, Govindaya Namaha in the beginning while sipping water three times and thereafter 24 Kesava Nama are recited by touching the body parts with fingers.

Generally, family tradition is followed. Whatever may be the type of Achamanam that is followed, it's very objective is one and the same that is, purification of body and the mind.

In practice we find three types of Achamanam that are in vogue. They are,

- > SrauthaAchamanam (MantraAchamanam);
- > PauranikaAchamanam (VaishnavaAchamanam);
- > Smarthaachamanam;

The one that is performed with Gayathri is called SmarthaAchamanam;

The one that is performed reciting ChaturVedas is called Srautha or ManthraAchamanam;

The one which is performed with Kesavadi Naamaas is called PauranikaAchamanam or VaishnavaAchamanam.

Majority follow the system of Pauranikaachamanam (with Kesavaadi Naamaas).

How to perform Achamanam?

Simplest version of performing Achamanam is, take a spoonful (Uddharani) of water poured into the cupped palm of the right hand,

then recite "Kesavaaya Swaaha" and sip it without making noise with the Palm tipped back slightly from the base of the thumb in the name of Lord Kesava.

The same act is performed for the second time reciting of "Narayanaya Swaaha" in the name of Lord Narayana.

The act is performed a third time reciting "Madhavaya Swaaha" in the name of Lord Madhava.

Above act is followed by reciting the other 21 names of Lord Vishnu called Kesava Naamaas by touching (sparsha) various sensory organs and other parts of the body as given below...

1. Govindaya Namaha (left hand is washed)
2. Vishnave Namaha (right hand is washed)
3. Madhusudhanaya Namaha
(upper lip is touched with right hand fingers)
4. Thrivikramaya Namaha (lower lip is touched...)
5. Vaamanaya Namaha (left cheek is touched)
6. Sridharaya Namaha (right cheek is touched)
7. Hrusheekesaya Namaha (both the hands are touched)
8. Padmanabhaya Namaha (Sprinkle water on the feet)
9. Damodaraya Namaha
(Centre of the head is touched with the middle finger)
10. Sankarshanaya Namaha (Nose edge is touched with the fist)
11. Vasudevaya Namaha (right nostril is touched)
12. Pradhyumnaya Namaha (left nostril is touched)

13. Aniruddhaya Namaha (right eye is touched)
14. Purushottamaya Namaha (left eye is touched)
15. Adhokshajaya Namaha (right ear is touched)
16. Narasimhaya Namaha (left ear is touched)
17. Achyutaya Namaha (Navel portion is touched)
18. Janardhanaya Namaha (Chest is touched)
19. Upendraya Namaha (Head is touched)
20. Haraye Namaha (right shoulder is touched)
21. Sri Krishnaya Namaha (left shoulder is touched)

➤ **OTHER TECHNICALITIES OF AACHAMANAM...**

> **Place & Posture...**

The place should be clean, free from any impure items. One should sit on an asana (mat) facing East or North in Padmaasana.

Knees and feet should not be protruding.

One should not stand while performing Aachamanam, but always in Kukkutasana (hen-like posture) sitting down with the soles of the feet firmly planted on the ground, the hands between the knees.

> **Hand configuration...**

The right hand should be held so that the forefinger, middle finger and ring finger are together and slightly bent upwards, while the little finger and the thumb are separated from the other three fingers.

> **Water...**

Water used for Achamanam (sipping) should be pure, cool but not hot, without foam or stagnation bubbles, without foul odor or bad taste, untouched by fingernails or hair or any other impure items.

Water of quantity to cover a grain of Urad Dal (Black gram) should be poured from the left hand by spoon (Uddharani) into the right palm.

One should say the appropriate mantra and sip the water from the Brahma Theertha of the right hand without making noise.

A Brahmin should always perform Achamanam using Brahma Theertha. He can also do it using Rishi theertha and Deva theertha but he should never do it using Pithru theertha.

This classification is based on where we hold the water in the right hand.

If we hold it just below the thumb it is Brahma Theertha;

if it is held just below the little finger it is Rishi Theertha;

If it is at the edge of four fingers, then it is Deva theertha;

If it is held between thumb and the first finger it is Pithru Theertha.

➤ **When to perform Achamanam?**

Though in general Achamanam precedes all Karmas, there are specific occasions when it is called for/prescribed. They are...

As a prelude to all nithya and naimittika karmas like,

- > Sandhyavandana,
- > Devatha Archana,
- > Brahma Yajna,
- > Vedaadhyayana,

- > Pithru Yajna (Sraddha/Tharpana),
- > Manthra japa,
- > Homa etc.
- > Immediately after waking up in the morning;
- > After urination and other forms of excretion;
- > After brushing one's teeth;
- > Before and after taking bath;
- > After wearing clothes;
- > Before and after the meals;
- > Speaking with or touching unsuitable persons,
- > After telling a lie;
- > Before and after giving or accepting alms or donation;
- > After sneezing, shedding tears or blood;
- > Upon physical contact with women;
- > Before and after crossing a river.....

Above list is only indicative, not exhaustive!

➤ **When not to perform Achamanam?**

Achamanam is not to be done in a standing position.

(Exception: one may perform Achamanam while standing if one is in water which is above the knees but below the navel)

Achamanam is not to be done facing west or south; always it should be facing east or north.

Achamanam should not be done with impure or falling water as from a tap or rain, but usually with water from a river or tank, or from a vessel held in the left hand.

When doing in a river or tank, the left hand should be touching the water.



It should not be performed casually, while speaking to others, by wearing a shirt or footwear; with a covered head; with laughter etc.

It should be performed with devotion and with the consciousness that one is uttering the holy names of the Almighty which purify and protect.

➤ **When Achamanam is forbidden?**

Achamanam is not to be done immediately after taking Bhagawad Prasada or sipping theertha as these are holy and pure and the symbolic act of purifying oneself through Achamanam insults their holiness.

➤ **Short-cut for Achamanam?**

There is one more type of Achamanam that is in vogue. It often happens that, though we need to purify ourselves through Achamanam, no water may be available at that time and place.

In such a situation the scripts prescribe an easy method of purification; that of touching the tip of the nose and then the right ear uttering Pranava mantra.

It is based on the Scriptural texts which say that, Agni resides in the Brahmana's nose tip and holy rivers like the Ganga in his right ear. Hence touching these two purifies a person immediately.

One would have observed elders reciting names of God (Krishna, Govinda etc.) whenever they sneeze or yawn. Perhaps this is with respect to the above principle.

It is to be noted that this short cut is to be adopted only when performing regular Achamanam is not possible.

Aachamana is Antaranga Snaana reciting the divine names of Lord Vishnu that enhances Bhagawad Saannidhya which helps in effectively neutralizing the effect of daityas inside our body coming in the way of our saadhana.

For performing any Kriya one should have Anthhahkarana Suddhi (inner purity) that is possible only by praying God by reciting His divine names (manthras) and the process of Aachamanam is only meant for that purpose.

➤ **Rushi Vaakya on Aachamanam...**

➤ **Aachamanam Vs Chaturvimshati Kesava Naamaas...**

➤ **Significance of Aachamanam...**

VYAASA...

Wash hands and legs and face, keep the sacred thread in normal position, and keeping both hands in between the knees, we have to do Aachamana. Then we have to clean the teeth.

Make right hand in the shape of an ear of the cow and take water three times. Then wipe the lips twice. Keeping the thumb and little finger open and folding the other three fingers, one has to drink the water. This is called the Aachamana method.

Every time one has to take water sufficient enough to drown a single grain of black gram.

MANU...

Aachamana should be done using Brahma theertha; the water which is not hot, facing east or north.

MAREECHI...

Aachamana should not be done standing or firmly sitting or with hands held outside the knees.

Immediately after meals Achamana can be done sitting firmly on the earth.

One should not Achamaneeyam with upper cloth worn on one side of the body or with cloth hiding the shoulders.

It should also not be done without sacred thread, wearing dirty cloths and not tying the hair.

All activities following such wrong Achamana need to be repeated again.

If Achamana is done facing south or west, then one need to take bath again and perform Achamanam again.

YAMA...

While doing Achamana one has to touch water (pot or river) with the left hand. This is because in the left hand reside the Dwadasa Adithyas as well as Varuna the lord of water.

Water in the bronze vessel, copper vessel and silver vessel is always pure. One has to hold the Uddharani (ceremonial spoon) and take the water from the vessel and pour it in the right hand and do Achamana.

Taking it directly by the left hand is considered equivalent to drinking of Alcohol.

SAUNAKA...

The water has to be taken after washing the hand and legs. The water that we see clearly should be used.

The water which can just drown a black gram should be taken and it is sufficient if it reaches up to the chest.

After the Achamana, close the lips and wipe the mouth by the base of the thumb twice. Then touch the mouth by all fingers

held together. Then all organs should be touched (sparsha) by the fingers.

SAMVARTHA...

Aachamana must be performed
after bath,
after taking food,
after drinking fluids,
after sneezing and
after sleep.

If during chanting of mantra one happen to see anything dirty, then Aachamana should be performed and chanting recommenced.

PARASARA...

Manu and Parasara are of the opinion that sacred waters of the river like Ganges, Sun, Varuna, Chandra, Fire and wind are always in the right ear of a Brahmin.

If one is not able to do Aachamana or if not able to get water for Aachamana when Aachamana is required to be performed then, touch the right ear. This is equivalent to Aachamana.

While doing Homa, taking/giving alms one need to perform Aachamana twice.

MARKANDEYA...

After eating mango, sugar cane piece, betel leaf and Soma Pana, there is no need to do Aachamanam.

After taking Vishnu Pada Theertha, Aachamana should not be performed.

➤ Aachamanam Vs Chaturvimshati (24) Kesava Naama...



We recite 24 names of Lord Vishnu during Achamanam the first three while sipping water and remaining 21 while touching (sparsha) the body parts.

These KesavAdi naama' recited are that of VyuHa rupas' of Lord Vishnu which govern the 24 Tattvas. One should visualize these vyUha rupas of ParamaAtma while doing nitya karma. These done with proper anusandhana will lead to punya karma and destroy pApa karma.

While doing Achamana, the 24 names of the Lord are said in the right order with appropriate gestures indicating the presence of the Lord in these parts of the body, and His supreme control on all the abhmani devatas who have been placed in these parts to do the respective kriyas.

Manu Smruthi compares these 24 names of the Supreme God with 24 tattvas (elements) of creation with which the universe is formed.

These 24 names of Lord Vishnu are also represented by the 24 syllables (beEjaAkshara) of Gayathri Manthra which glorifies the 24 rupas that have influence on the human body.

First three names > Kesava, Narayana, Madhava are Tapatraya Nivarakas.

For performing any Kriya one should have Anthhahkarana Suddhi (inner purity) that is possible only by praying God by reciting His divine names (manthras) and the process of Achamanam is only meant for that purpose.

Reciting these names of Supreme God is the link for devotion as it cleanses the inner body of the human being that helps in attaining quick results.

Achamana is Antaranga Snaana reciting the divine names of Lord Vishnu that enhances Bhagawad Saannidhya which helps

in effectively neutralizing the effect of daityas inside our body coming in the way of our saadhana.

The name of God Vishnu is so powerful that it has the capacity to vanquish any sins and desires. Whether it is done knowingly or unknowingly with or without understanding its meaning and significance, reciting divine name will never go a waste.

The one that is done by knowing its meaning and significance will not only eliminate the sins but also helps in gaining the divine knowledge that leads to the right path for ultimate salvation.

➤ **SIGNIFICANCE OF AACHAMANAM...**

Water is profusely glorified in Vedas and is used in Vedic rituals for sipping, touching to parts of the body, sprinkling over the body, and for bathing the body.

Taking pure, cool water internally is purifying and invigorating both physically and mentally.

When it is accompanied by utterance of the divine names of Lord Vishnu one becomes filled with spiritual qualities.

Aachamanam is a standard form of purification, prerequisite for meditation, pooja, homa and other sacred activities.

A Brahmana becomes purified by performing Aachamanam if the water penetrates to the heart (i.e. by swallowing the water completely).

A Kshathriya becomes purified by performing Aachamanam if the water reaches his throat.

A Vysya becomes purified if the water reaches his palate (inside the mouth). A Sudra or a Woman becomes purified if the water touches his or her lips.

During Achamanam one touches various parts of the body because in different organs of the body are located various energies and their deities.

According to Sage Sri Veda Vyasa, all the deities are propitiated by the intake of water with the Achyuta, Ananta and Govinda Naama.

Wiping the lips pleases Ganga and Yamuna;
Touching the eyes pleases Surya and Chandra;
Aswini Devathas are propitiated by touching the nose;
Agni and Vayu by the ears.

With the Padmanabha manthra all the thirty-three crore Deities are pleased and the Paramatma by touching the head.

When manthras are recited/chanted lot of heat is produced in the body due to which the throat and the mouth can become dry. Achamanam done three times aims at remedying this dryness.

One need not drink mouthful of water in Achamanam. One only needs to sip as much as is required to make the mouth and throat wet and reach the heart.

Any ritual performed without Achamanam and Sankalpa do not yield any result and is useless.

All karmas performed without Achamanam are destined to fail and would be futile.

Sri Krishnaarpanamasthu

'nAham kartA hariH kartA'

Hari Sarvottama - Vaayu Jeevottama

Sri GuruRaajoVijayate

Compiled/composed by bhargavasarma

(nirikhi krishna bhagavan)

ಆಚಮನದಿಂದ ಮನಶುದ್ಧಿ
 ಮಾರ್ಜನದಿಂದ ದೇಹಶುದ್ಧಿ
 ಅರ್ಘ್ಯದಿಂದ ದೈತ್ಯನಾಶ
 ಭೂತೋಚ್ಚಾಟನದಿಂದ ಭೂತನಾಶ
 ಜಪದಿಂದ ಸರ್ವಪಾಪನಾಶ,
 ಪುಣ್ಯಪ್ರಾಪ್ತಿ.

